

MASTER OF
KUNG FU

MARVEL COMICS GROUP™

APPROVED
BY THE
COMICS
CODE
AUTHORITY

44
SEPT
02449



THE HANDS OF SHANG-CHI, MASTER OF KUNG FU™

THIS
IS IT!
SON VS.
FATHER!

BUSCEMA/NILGROM



FU MANCHU

RETURNS IN--

**DEATH-DAY OF THE
GOLDEN DAGGER!**

"Call me Shang-Chi, as my **father** did, when he raised me and molded my mind and my body in the vacuum of his Honan, China retreat. I learned many things from my father. Since then, I have learned that my father is **Dr. Fu Manchu**, the most insidiously evil man on earth...and that to **honor** him would bring nothing but **dishonor** to the spirit of my **name**.

Stan Lee
PRESENTS:

MASTER OF KUNG FU!

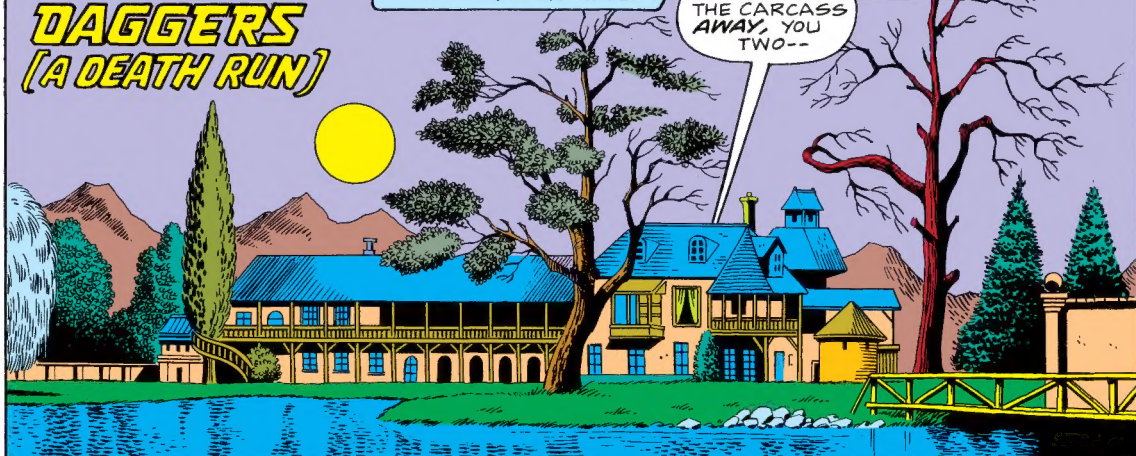
Featuring supporting characters created by SAX ROHMER

PRELUDE: GOLDEN DAGGERS (A DEATH RUN)

"SIR HERBERT GRISWOLD'S ESTATE, IN SWITZERLAND: WE GATHERED AROUND THE DEFEAT OF THE MADMAN CALLED SHOCK-WAVE..."

SO IT'S OUR OLD FRIEND LANCASTER SNEED AGAIN, EH? WELL, I IMAGINE NAYLAND SMITH SHOULD BE INTERESTED IN THIS CATCH.

HAUL THE CARCASS AWAY, YOU TWO--



--AND SHIP IT TO MI-6 IN LONDON.

YES, SIR HERBERT-- AT ONCE, SIR.

COME ON, NINE. WE'LL CART HIM TO THE BOAT-HOUSE.

SHANG-CHI... KILL... JUST A PUNK... EASY... KILL...

RIGHT, FIVE. PERHAPS WE CAN DRY HIS CIRCUITS OUT, OR AT LEAST GET HIS NEEDLE UNSTUCK.



DOUG
MOENCH
WRITER

PAUL
GULACY
ARTIST

JACK ABEL, INKER
ANNETTE KAWECKI,
LETTERER
DON WARFIELD,
COLORIST
ARCHIE GOODWIN, EDITOR

"BUT MY MIND DWELLS NOT ON **SHOCK-WAVE** NOW--NOR ON **LEIKO**, WHOSE BREATH SOFTLY STIRS MY HAIR--BUT ON THE IMPOSSIBLE FACT THAT **AGENT-D** IS--

DUCHARME.

BUT--

--YOU--

YES, SHANG-CHI...

"HER VOICE IS QUIET, TREMBLING WITH HIDDEN EMOTION...A BROKEN BIRD STRAINING FOR FLIGHT..."

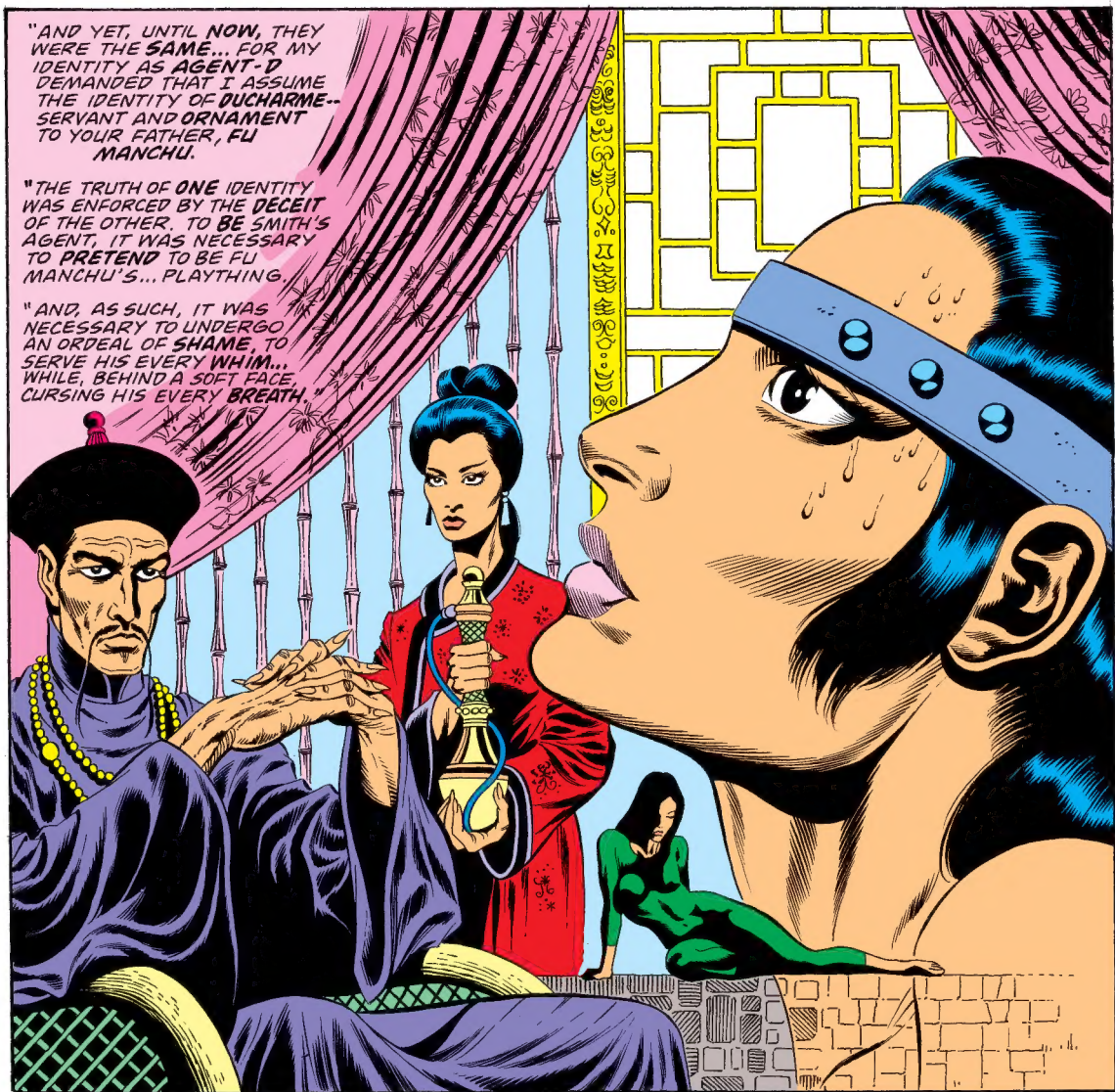
I AM **DUCHARME**...AND I AM ALSO SMITH'S "**MOLE**"--**AGENT-D**.

THE TWO IDENTITIES ARE **SEPARATED** ONLY BY LONG YEARS OF... **PAIN**.

"AND YET, UNTIL NOW, THEY WERE THE SAME... FOR MY IDENTITY AS **AGENT-D** DEMANDED THAT I ASSUME THE IDENTITY OF **DUCHARME**--SERVANT AND ORNAMENT TO YOUR FATHER, **FU MANCHU**.

"THE TRUTH OF ONE IDENTITY WAS ENFORCED BY THE DECEIT OF THE OTHER. TO BE SMITH'S AGENT, IT WAS NECESSARY TO **PRETEND** TO BE **FU MANCHU'S**... PLAYTHING.

"AND, AS SUCH, IT WAS NECESSARY TO UNDERGO AN ORDEAL OF **SHAME**, TO SERVE HIS EVERY WHIM... WHILE, BEHIND A SOFT FACE, CURSING HIS EVERY BREATH."



BUT **HOW**, DUCHARME? **WHY?** WHY HAVE YOU **ENDURED** SUCH AN EXISTENCE--IF IT WAS NOT **VOLUNTARY?**

THE ANSWER LIES FORTY YEARS IN THE **PAST**, SHANG-CHI...

...ALTHOUGH MY FACE DOES NOT BEAR THE **SCARS** OF THOSE YEARS.

YOU SEE, YOUR FATHER PROVIDED **ME** WITH HIS ELIXIR OF IMMORTALITY, TOO--AND THUS, WHILE MY **SOUL** HAS GREATLY **CHANGED--**

"--MY FACE DIFFERS **LITTLE** FROM THE YOUNG WOMAN WHO, FORTY YEARS AGO, EMBRACED A LOVER NAMED **PAN CHEN**.

"THE SUN MOVED THROUGH THE SKY FOR **US** ALONE, SHANG-CHI. THE **MOON** CARED FOR **NO** ONE BUT **US**. WE EMBRACED **MORE** THAN EACH OTHER--IN MY ARMS WERE **TWO** LIVES, AS **ONE**.

"ONE DAY, WHEN THE SUN MOVED **MORE** SLOWLY, PAN CHEN FOUND IT NECESSARY TO **LEAVE** ME, CONFESSING THAT HE MEMBERED AMONG THE CULT OF ASSASSINS CALLED **SI-FAN**.

"HE HAD RECEIVED ORDERS FROM HIS **MASTER--**

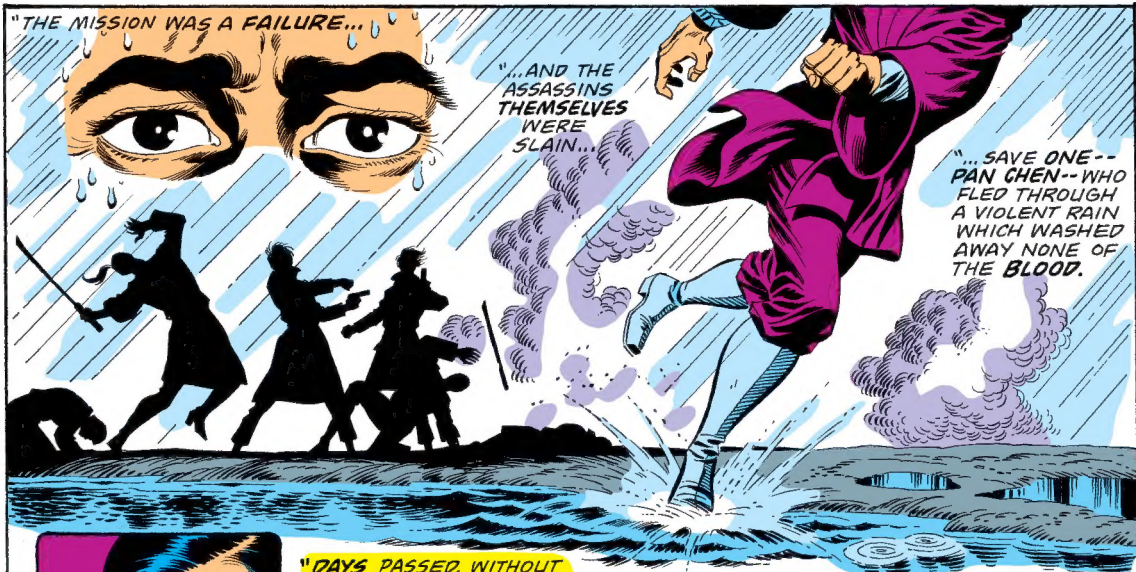
"IN HIS, THE **SAME**.

"-- A **POWERFUL** MAN, UNKNOWN TO ME, NAMED **FU MANCHU**.

"THERE WAS A **MISSION** TO PERFORM.

"IT WAS A **DARK** MISSION. ALONG WITH SEVERAL OTHER **SI-FAN**, PAN CHEN WAS TO SLAY **NAYLAND SMITH** AND **DR. PETRIE**, THEN BOTH YOUNG MEN, CLOSE TO HIS OWN AGE--TO **OUR** AGE.

"THE **MOON**, THAT NIGHT CARED FOR **NO** ONE.



"THE MISSION WAS A FAILURE..."

"...AND THE ASSASSINS THEMSELVES WERE SLAIN..."

"...SAVE ONE-- PAN CHEN-- WHO FLED THROUGH A VIOLENT RAIN WHICH WASHED AWAY NONE OF THE BLOOD."

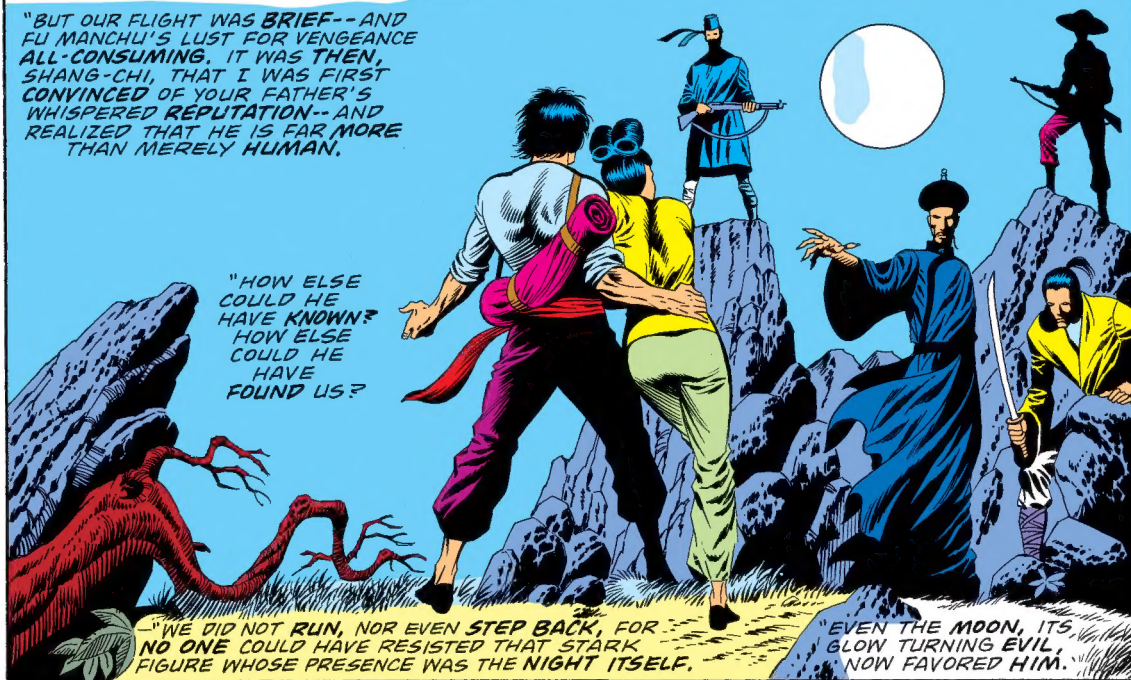


"DAYS PASSED, WITHOUT SUN, BEFORE I RECEIVED A MESSAGE FROM HIM. HIS MASTER, HE KNEW, WOULD PUNISH HIS FAILURE WITH DEATH-- AND SO, I WAS TO MEET HIM AT A PLACE KNOWN ONLY TO US, THROUGH OUR PRIVATE LOVE."

"TOGETHER, WE WOULD FLEE HUNAN PROVINCE-- PERHAPS CHINA ITSELF-- AND FIND A NEW LIFE UNDAKED BY THE SHADOW OF FU MANCHU'S WRATH."



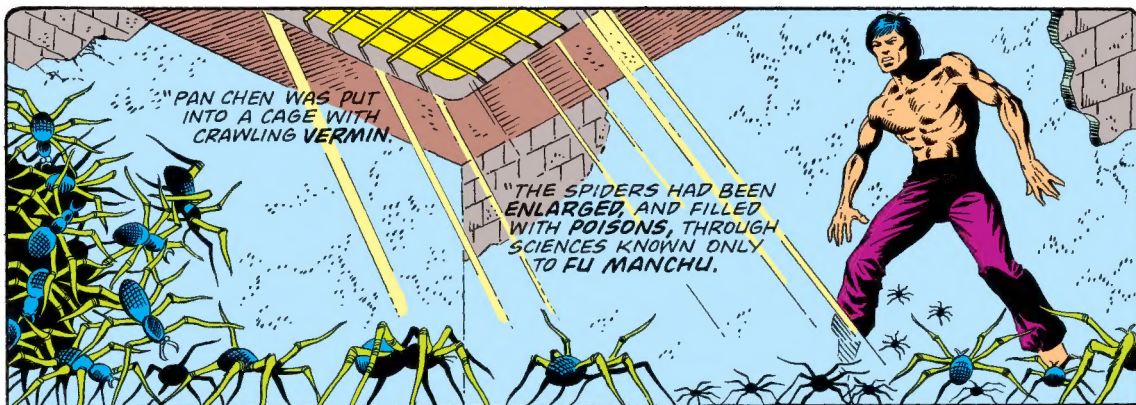
"BUT OUR FLIGHT WAS BRIEF-- AND FU MANCHU'S LUST FOR VENGEANCE ALL-CONSUMING. IT WAS THEN, SHANG-CHI, THAT I WAS FIRST CONVINCED OF YOUR FATHER'S WHISPERED REPUTATION-- AND REALIZED THAT HE IS FAR MORE THAN MERELY HUMAN."



"HOW ELSE COULD HE HAVE KNOWN? HOW ELSE COULD HE HAVE FOUND US?"

"WE DID NOT RUN, NOR EVEN STEP BACK, FOR NO ONE COULD HAVE RESISTED THAT STARK FIGURE WHOSE PRESENCE WAS THE NIGHT ITSELF."

"EVEN THE MOON, ITS GLOW TURNING EVIL, NOW FAVORED HIM."



"PAN CHEN WAS PUT INTO A CAGE WITH CRAWLING VERMIN."

"THE SPIDERS HAD BEEN ENLARGED, AND FILLED WITH POISONS, THROUGH SCIENCES KNOWN ONLY TO FU MANCHU."



"I WAS FORCED TO WATCH--"

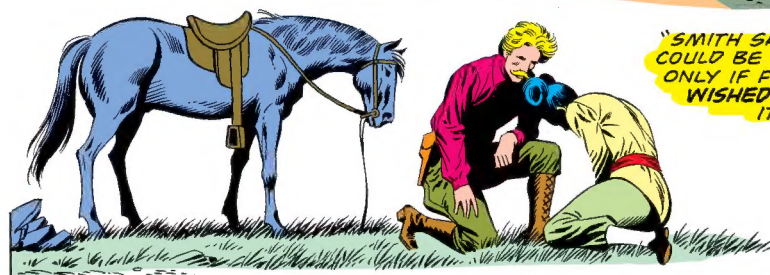
"--TO LISTEN TO FU MANCHU'S SOFT LAUGHTER--"

"--MOCKING MY LOVER'S LOUD SCREAMS."

"I EVENTUALLY ESCAPED THE FORTRESS, PERHAPS ONLY BECAUSE FU MANCHU HARBORED NO DESIRE TO KEEP ME... BUT STILL, I FEARED FOR MY LIFE-- FEARED THAT HE WOULD COME AFTER ME-- FEARED THE SPIDERS..."

"I HAD NOWHERE TO GO--NO ONE TO TURN TO. MY FAMILY WAS DISTANT, MY LOVER NOW DEAD... AND SO, I SOUGHT THE ONLY PERSON OF WHOM I COULD THINK."

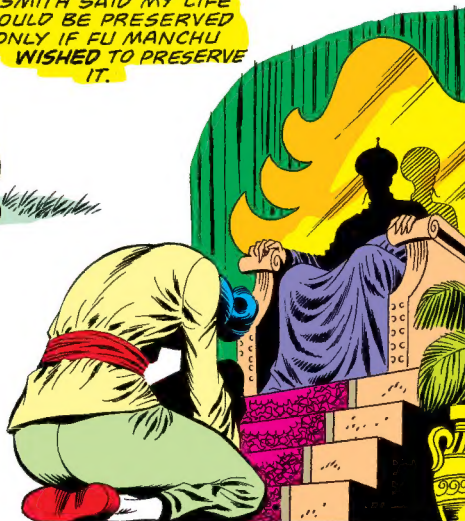
"I WENT TO NAYLAND SMITH, AND BESEECHED HIM TO PROTECT ME..."



"SMITH SAID MY LIFE COULD BE PRESERVED ONLY IF FU MANCHU WISHED TO PRESERVE IT."

"AND TO CONVINCE YOUR FATHER THAT I COULD BE TRUSTED-- THAT I WAS LOYAL AND VALUABLE TO HIM-- SMITH PROVIDED ME WITH SECRET INFORMATION WHICH MADE IT SEEM I WAS BETRAYING HIM."

"HUMBLY, I TOOK THIS INFORMATION TO FU MANCHU, WINNING HIS FAVOR, AS WELL AS HIS DESIRE TO... KEEP ME."



SINCE THEN, SHANG-CHI, I HAVE SUFFERED AN **UNSPEAKABLE EXISTENCE**-- BUT ALL THE WHILE PRIVILEGED TO OCCASIONAL PIECES OF **INFORMATION** REGARDING FU MANCHU'S VARIOUS **SCHEMES**...

YOUR FATHER HAS FINALLY DISCOVERED DUCHARME'S **TRUE LOYALTIES**, SHANG-CHI, AND WANTS HER **DEATH**.

HE HAS THE **GOLDEN DAGGER** SECT AFTER HER NOW. THEIR FRONT WAS "**ORIENTAL EXPEDITERS**" WITH **SHOCK-WAVE** IN COMMAND. THAT'S WHY WE MUST **PROTECT** DUCHARME NOW--KEEP HER FROM GETTING **SNUFFED** BY FU MANCHU'S **GOLDEN DAGGER** AGENTS.

... INFORMATION I HAVE BEEN TRANSMITTING TO **NAYLAND SMITH** FOR THE PAST **FORTY YEARS**.

YES... BUT THAT'S ALL OVER NOW.

"I HAVE SWORN TO NEVER AGAIN INVOLVE MYSELF IN MY FATHER'S AFFAIRS, BUT NOW, IT SEEMS, THERE IS NO CHOICE..."

... AND ALL DUE TO MY **ALLIANCE** WITH SMITH'S ORGANIZATION IN LONDON--**MI-6**.

-- BEEN MEANING TO **ASK** YOU, LARNER--

WHAT?

WHY HAVE YOU BEEN SPENDING SO MUCH TIME EXAMINING THOSE **BOMB FRAGMENTS**?

JUST CHECKING OUT A HUNCH.

BY THE **WAY**... YOU'D BETTER PACK YOUR **BAGS**, RESTON--FOR A TRIP TO **LAUSANNE, SWITZERLAND**.

LAUSANNE--? BUT I THOUGHT CHI AND LEIKO WERE SUPPOSED TO RENDEZVOUS AT **GRISWOLD'S ESTATE** OUTSIDE **ZURICH**.

YEAH, MAYBE SMITH **WILL** WANT YOU TO GO TO **ZURICH**--TO **PICK UP** CHI AND LEIKO-- BUT AFTER STUDYING THESE **BOMB FRAGMENTS**...

... I'M DEAD CERTAIN YOUR FIRST STOP AFTER THAT IS GONNA BE **LAUSANNE**.

THAT'S WHERE THESE **BOMBS** **ORIGINATED**-- THEY WERE MANUFACTURED BY A GUY NAMED **TARRANT**.

HIS TOUCH IS **UNMISTAKABLE**-- AND HE OPERATES OUT OF **LAUSANNE**.

DON'T LET A BUMPY FLIGHT PUT ANY EXTRA **BUTTERFLIES** IN YOUR **BELLY**, CLIVE--YOU'LL HAVE MORE THAN **ENOUGH** ONCE YOU GET THERE.

--JUST RECEIVED A COMMUNIQUÉ FROM SMITH. BLOODY PESTY DEVIL, THAT MAN.

ANYWAY, YOU'RE TO GO TO ZURICH IMMEDIATELY--NIEDERDORF AND RINDER-MARKET STREETS--TO MEET WITH YOUR CONTACT, WHO, APPARENTLY, WILL PROVIDE YOU WITH TRANSPORTATION TO LAUSANNE.

OH, YES--DUCHARME WILL REMAIN HERE FOR SAFE-KEEPING--AT LEAST FOR THE TIME BEING.

LOVELY CITY, LAUSANNE--ABOUT 160 KILOMETRES FROM HERE, ON LAKE GENEVA. I ENVY YOU THE JOURNEY.

AND WHO IS OUR CONTACT, SIR HERBERT?

A RATHER UPPITY, OBNOXIOUS YOUNG CHAP WHOSE COMPANY I HAVE UNPLEASANTLY SHARED ONCE OR TWICE IN THE PAST--

--CLIVE RESTON.

--RESTON, WHO WILL PICK UP BOTH LEIKO WU AND SHANG-CHI. AND THEY NOW KNOW THAT THE BOMBS ORIGINATED IN LAUSANNE.

FROM THAT INFORMATION, THEY HAVE ACCURATELY DEPUDED THE HEADQUARTERS OF THE GOLDEN DRAGON SECT--AND THEREFORE RESTON, WU, AND SHANG-CHI WILL PROBABLY TRAVEL ONE OF THE ROUTES FROM ZURICH TO LAUSANNE.

I SUGGEST YOU POST INTERCEPTING AGENTS IMMEDIATELY.

ADVICE RECEIVED. AND THE STATUS OF AGENT BLACK JACK TARR?

OUR GAMBIT WAS SUCCESSFUL. TARR IS OUT OF ACTION. MUST BREAK COMMUNICATIONS NOW--BEFORE I'M MISSED.

OUT.

"LEIKO'S MOUTH... TWITCHES."

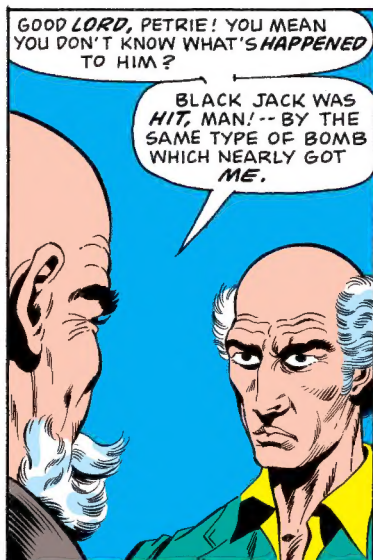
HERE YOU ARE, PETRIE! I'VE BEEN LOOKING ALL OVER FOR YOU.

THOUGHT YOU MIGHT LIKE TO COME WITH ME--

--TO VISIT BLACK JACK.

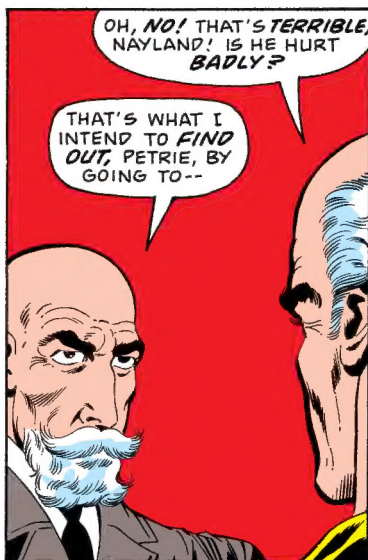
VISIT HIM, NAYLAND?

CAN'T BLACK JACK COME HERE?



GOOD LORD, PETRIE! YOU MEAN YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT'S HAPPENED TO HIM?

BLACK JACK WAS HIT, MAN!-- BY THE SAME TYPE OF BOMB WHICH NEARLY GOT ME.



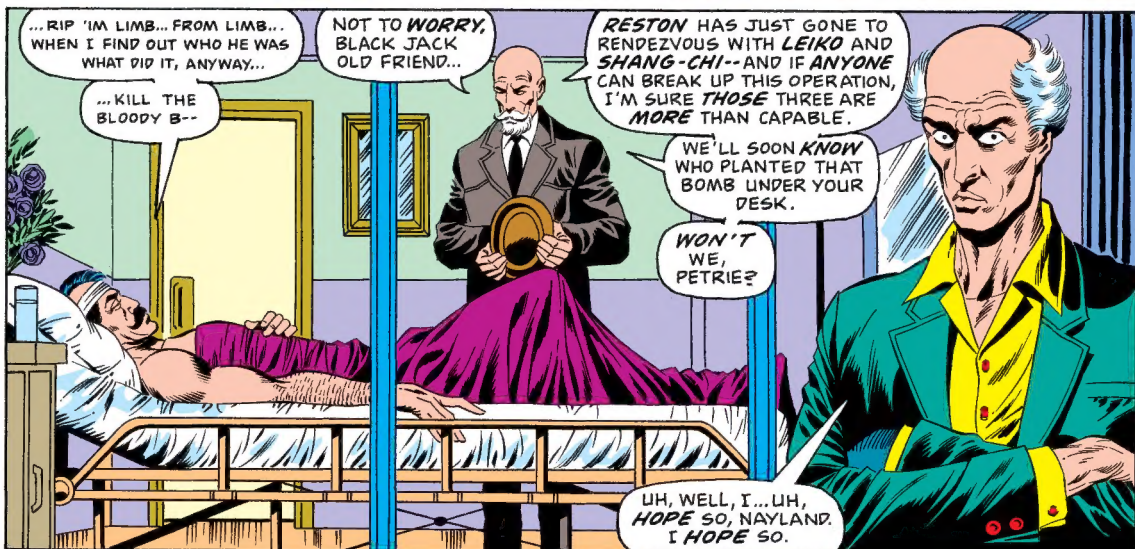
OH, NO! THAT'S TERRIBLE, NAYLAND! IS HE HURT BADLY?

THAT'S WHAT I INTEND TO FIND OUT, PETRIE, BY GOING TO--



"--THE HOSPITAL."

I'LL... KILL HIM, SIR... DENIS... I SWEAR IT...



...RIP 'IM LIMB... FROM LIMB... WHEN I FIND OUT WHO HE WAS WHAT DID IT, ANYWAY...

...KILL THE BLOODY B--

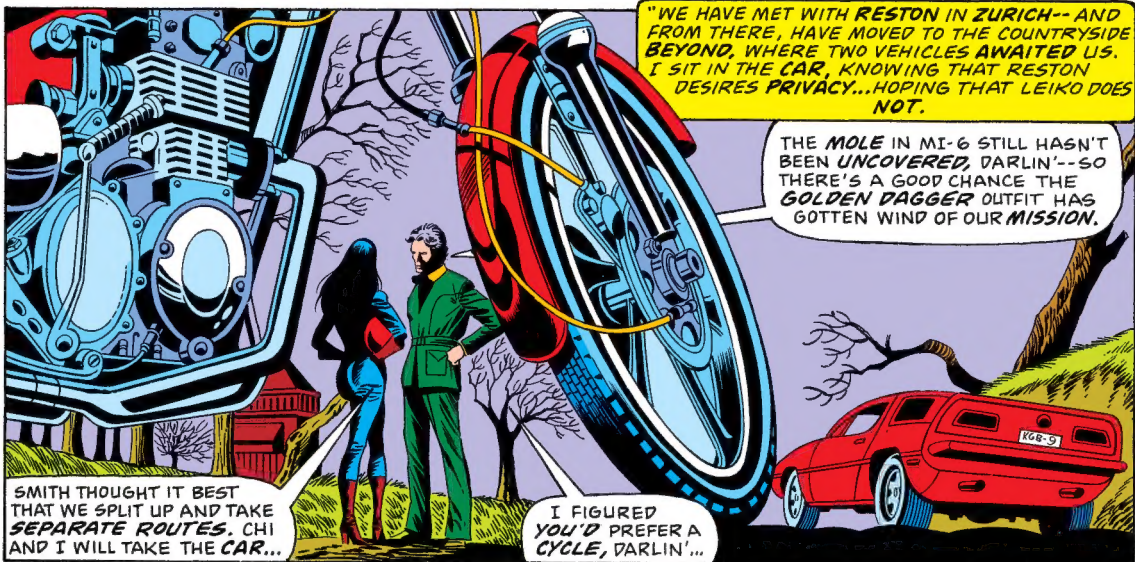
NOT TO WORRY, BLACK JACK OLD FRIEND...

RESTON HAS JUST GONE TO RENDEZVOUS WITH LEIKO AND SHANG-CHI-- AND IF ANYONE CAN BREAK UP THIS OPERATION, I'M SURE THOSE THREE ARE MORE THAN CAPABLE.

WE'LL SOON KNOW WHO PLANTED THAT BOMB UNDER YOUR DESK.

WON'T WE, PETRIE?

UH, WELL, I... UH, HOPE SO, NAYLAND. I HOPE SO.

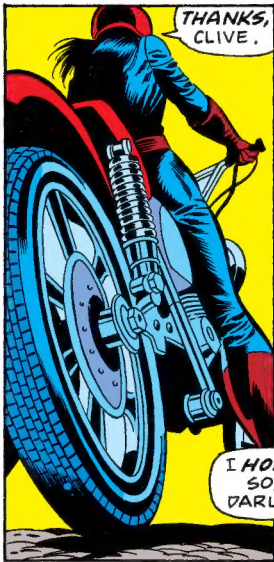


"WE HAVE MET WITH RESTON IN ZURICH-- AND FROM THERE, HAVE MOVED TO THE COUNTRYSIDE BEYOND, WHERE TWO VEHICLES AWAITED US. I SIT IN THE CAR, KNOWING THAT RESTON DESIRES PRIVACY... HOPING THAT LEIKO DOES NOT.

THE MOLE IN MI-6 STILL HASN'T BEEN UNCOVERED, DARLIN-- SO THERE'S A GOOD CHANCE THE GOLDEN DAGGER OUTFIT HAS GOTTEN WIND OF OUR MISSION.

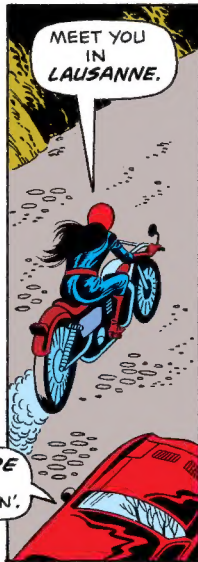
SMITH THOUGHT IT BEST THAT WE SPLIT UP AND TAKE SEPARATE ROUTES. CHI AND I WILL TAKE THE CAR...

I FIGURED YOU'D PREFER A CYCLE, DARLIN!...



THANKS,
CLIVE.

I HOPE
SO,
DARLIN'.



MEET YOU
IN
LAUSANNE.



BUT THEN, I GUESS
WE **BOTH** HOLD A
LOT OF HOPE--**DON'T**
WE, CHI?

AND DON'T LOOK
SO **SURPRISED**.

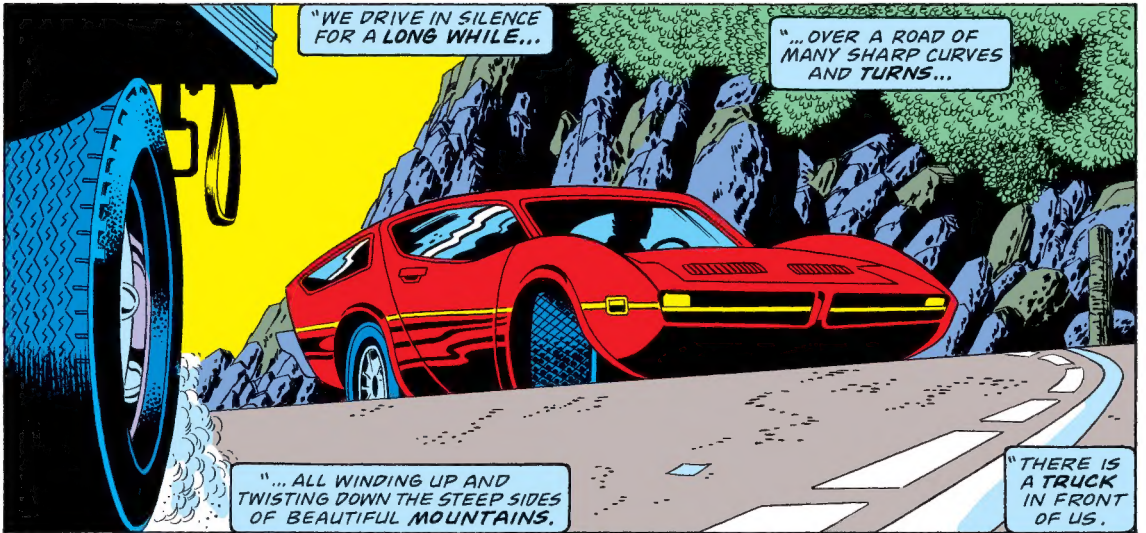


I **KNOW** WHAT'S BEEN GOING ON BETWEEN
YOU AND LEIKO--BUT I STILL CAN'T HELP
WHAT I **FEEL**. I'VE **TRIED** TO TURN IT
OFF, LORD KNOWS, BUT THIS IS **ONE**
FIRE INSIDE ME THAT CAN'T BE DOUSED
BY **BOOZE**.

SO I GUESS I'M YOUR **RIVAL**, CHI--
AND SINCE YOU'RE **ALSO** A **FRIEND**,
I OWE YOU A **WARNING**--

I MAKE A **BAD** RIVAL,
I FIGHT **DIRTY**.

NOW LET'S
GET **GOING**.

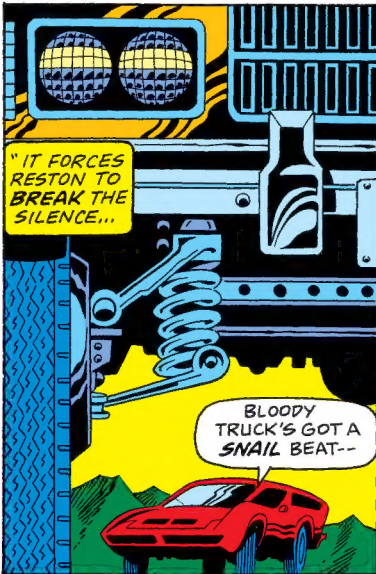


"WE DRIVE IN SILENCE
FOR A LONG WHILE..."

"...OVER A ROAD OF
MANY SHARP CURVES
AND TURNS..."

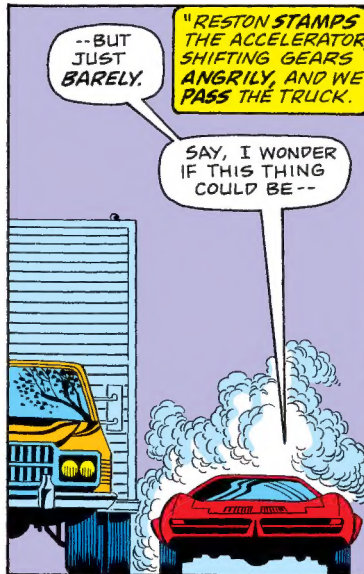
"...ALL WINDING UP AND
TWISTING DOWN THE STEEP SIDES
OF BEAUTIFUL MOUNTAINS."

"THERE IS
A **TRUCK**
IN FRONT
OF US."



"IT FORCES
RESTON TO
BREAK THE
SILENCE..."

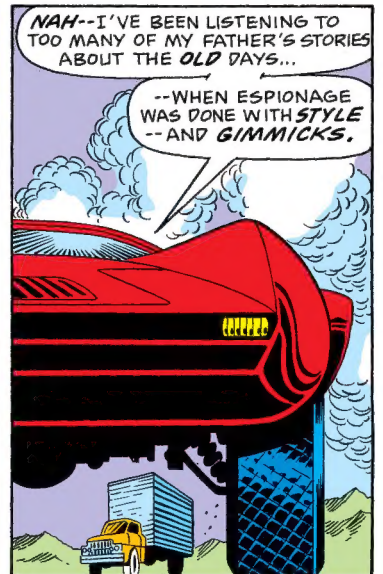
BLOODY
TRUCK'S GOT A
SNAIL BEAT--



--BUT
JUST
BARELY.

"RESTON **STAMPS**
THE **ACCELERATOR**,
SHIFTING **GEARS**
ANGRILY, AND WE
PASS THE **TRUCK**."

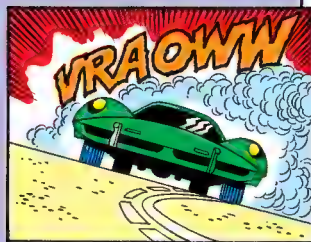
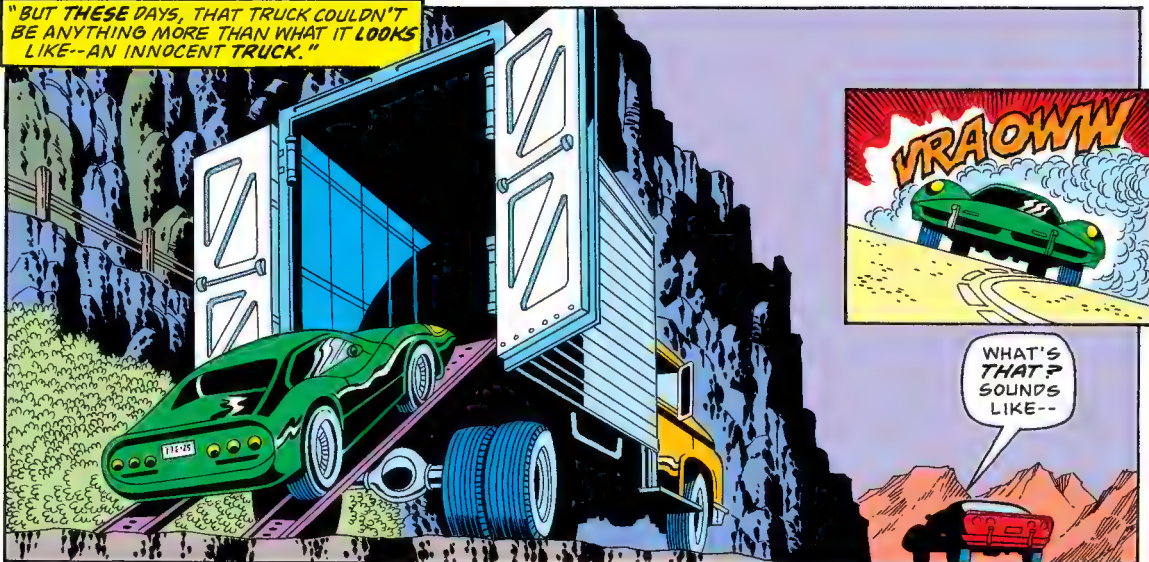
SAY, I WONDER
IF THIS THING
COULD BE--



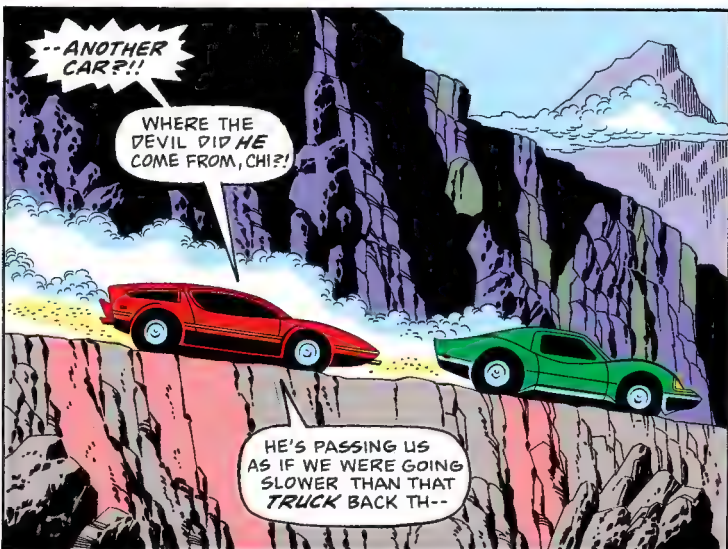
NAH--I'VE BEEN LISTENING TO
TOO MANY OF MY FATHER'S STORIES
ABOUT THE **OLD** DAYS...

--WHEN ESPIONAGE
WAS DONE WITH **STYLE**
--AND **GIMMICKS**.

"BUT THESE DAYS, THAT TRUCK COULDN'T BE ANYTHING MORE THAN WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE--AN INNOCENT TRUCK."



WHAT'S THAT? SOUNDS LIKE--



--ANOTHER CAR?!!

WHERE THE DEVIL DID HE COME FROM, CHI?!

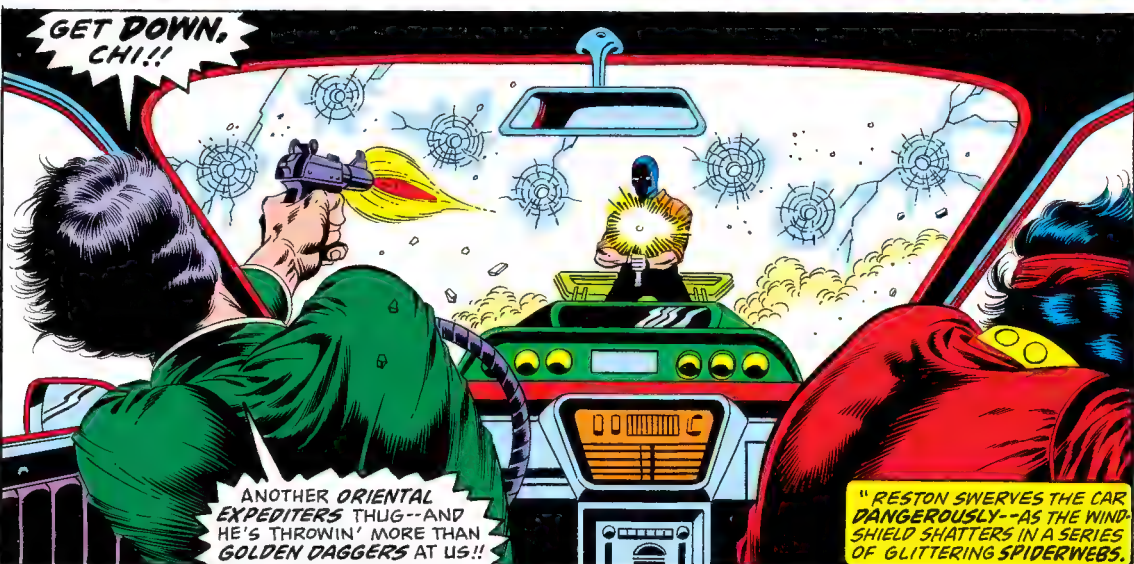
HE'S PASSING US AS IF WE WERE GOING SLOWER THAN THAT TRUCK BACK TH--

"THE ROOF FLIES OPEN."

"A MAN SPRINGS UP."



"BULLETS SPRAY."



GET DOWN, CHI!!

ANOTHER ORIENTAL EXPEDITERS THUG--AND HE'S THROWIN' MORE THAN GOLDEN DAGGERS AT US!!

"RESTON SWERVES THE CAR DANGEROUSLY--AS THE WINDSHIELD SHATTERS IN A SERIES OF GLITTERING SPIDERWEBS."

"I HAVE DEVOTED MY ENTIRE LIFE TO MASTERING THE SKILLS OF KUNG FU--SKILLS WHICH ARE NOW COMPLETELY USELESS."

"BUT AHEAD OF US--A BRIDGE!"

GET DOWN, FOOL--
BACK IN THE CAR--

--OR YOU'LL NEVER
CLEAR THE--

--BRIDGE?

YOO
HOO.

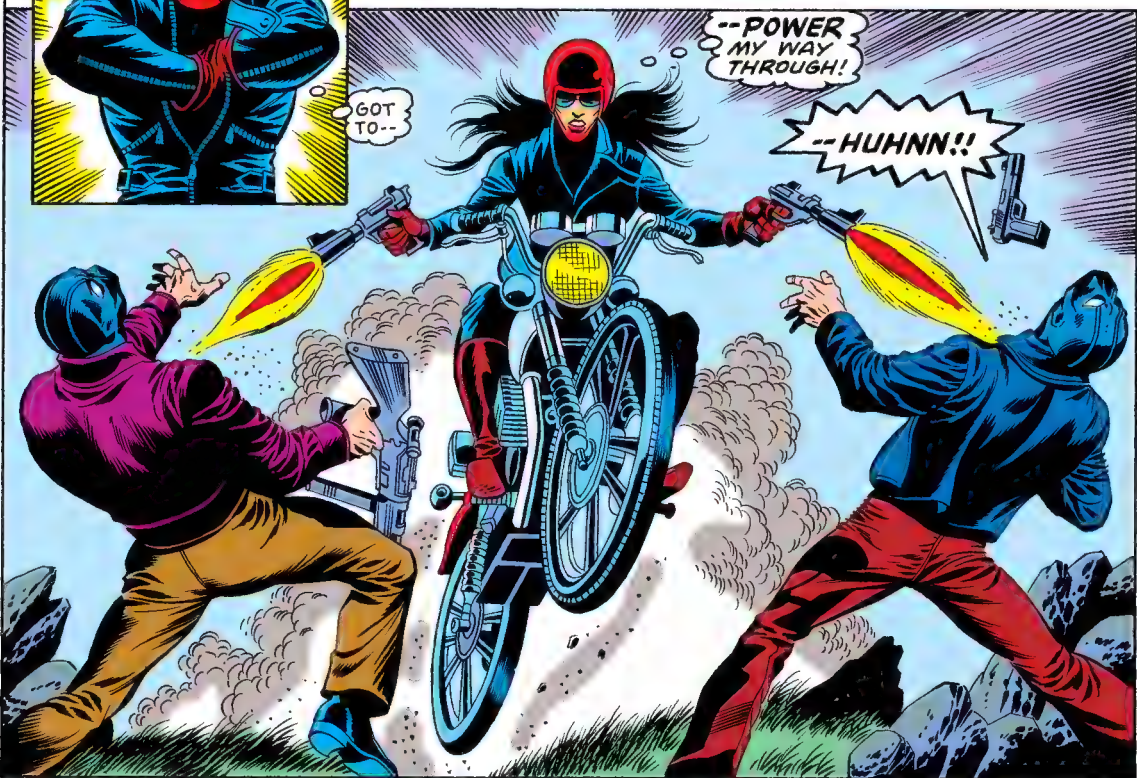
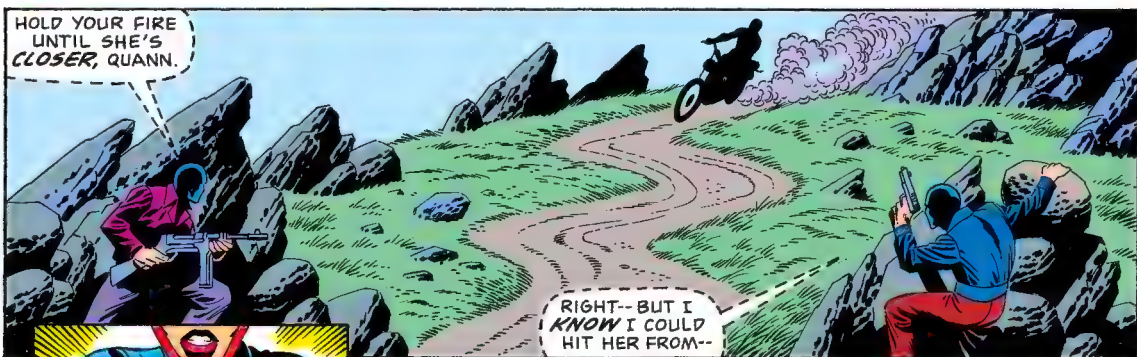
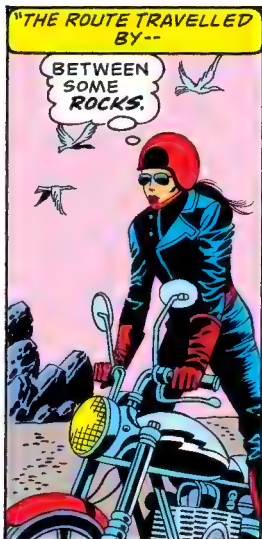
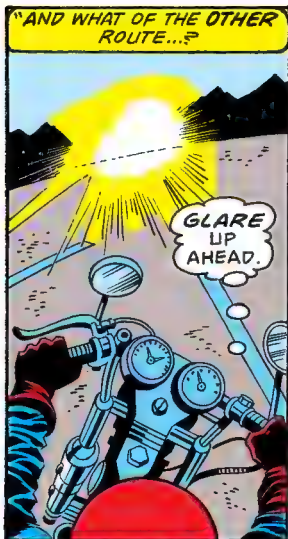
WHAT
THE--?!!

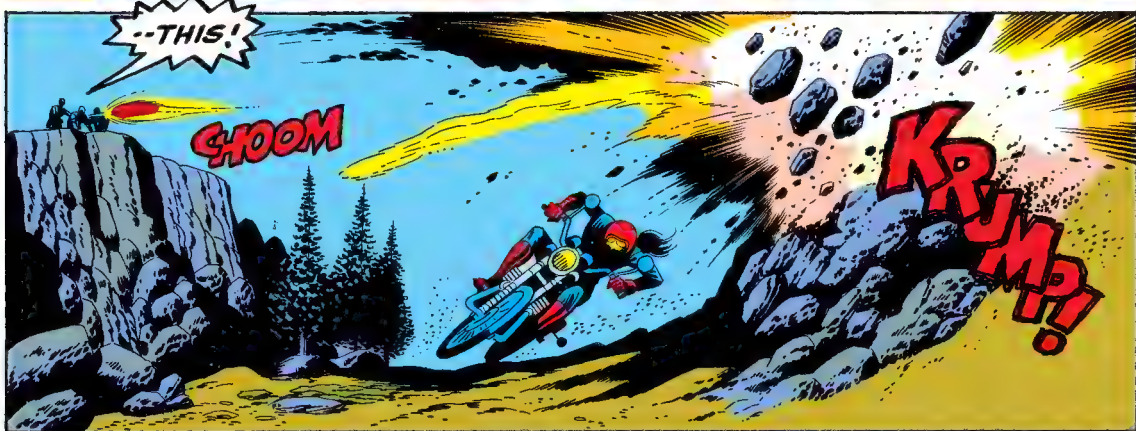
BANG.

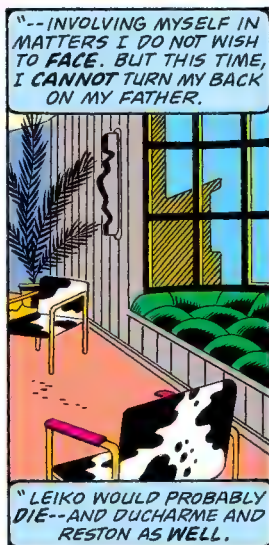
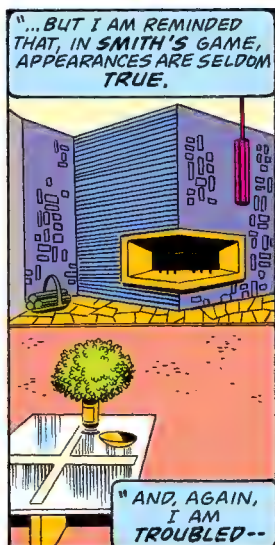
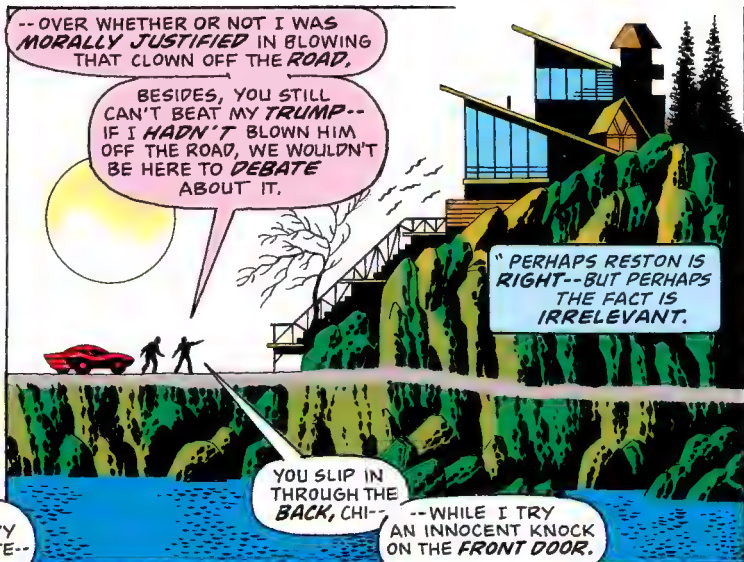
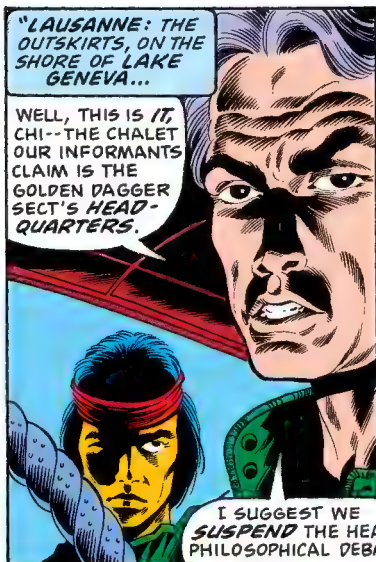
YOU'RE
DEAD.

"THE CAR
LEAVES
THE ROAD."

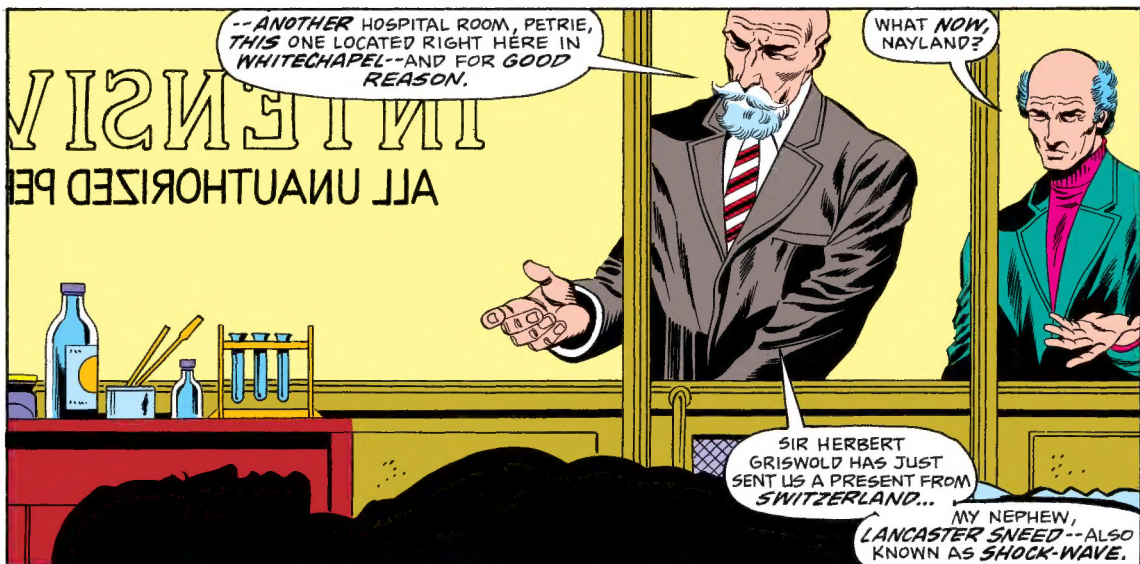
"IN FLAMES."











-- ANOTHER HOSPITAL ROOM, PETRIE, THIS ONE LOCATED RIGHT HERE IN WHITECHAPEL--AND FOR GOOD REASON.

WHAT NOW, NAYLAND?

SIR HERBERT GRISWOLD HAS JUST SENT US A PRESENT FROM SWITZERLAND...

MY NEPHEW, LANCASTER SNEED--ALSO KNOWN AS SHOCK-WAVE.



YOU INTERNS MAY LEAVE NOW. THIS IS CONFIDENTIAL.

PETRIE AND I WILL SPEAK TO HIM ALONE.



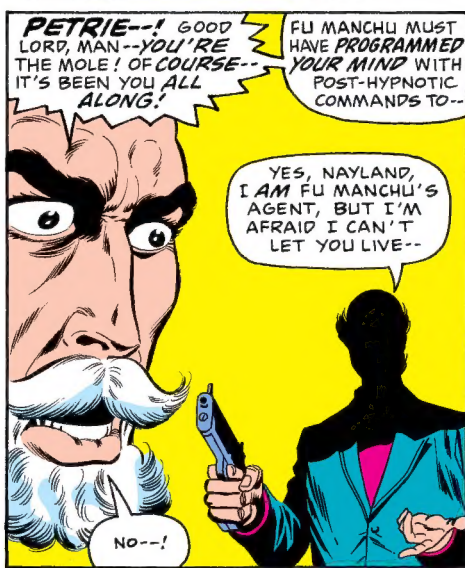
I KNOW YOU'VE BEEN SEVERELY INJURED, LANCASTER, BUT I MUST ASK YOU ONE QUESTION--A SIMPLE WHY? HAVE I NOT TRIED TO HELP YOU IN THE PAST?

WHY DID YOU HAVE TO DO THIS? WHY DID YOU TURN ON ME AGAIN?



PETRIE... THE BOMB? IS TARR DEAD...? WE DIDN'T... FAIL AGAIN, DID WE...? LIKE WE DID WITH... SMITH...?

SHUT UP, YOU FOOL! YOU'RE DELIRIOUS!

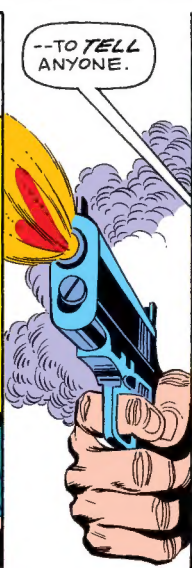


PETRIE--! GOOD LORD, MAN--YOU'RE THE MOLE! OF COURSE--IT'S BEEN YOU ALL ALONG!

FU MANCHU MUST HAVE PROGRAMMED YOUR MIND WITH POST-HYPNOTIC COMMANDS TO--

YES, NAYLAND, I AM FU MANCHU'S AGENT, BUT I'M AFRAID I CAN'T LET YOU LIVE--

NO--!



--TO TELL ANYONE.



INTERNS-- QUICKLY!!

SNEED GRABBED MY GUN!

HE'S SHOT NAYLAND SMITH!!



--AND THEN IT LOOKS LIKE OUR LITTLE DONNY-BROOK IS--



"--ENDED, AND THE RAGE WHICH I HAVE SUPPRESSED DURING BATTLE..."



"BEHIND ME, A DOORWAY OF FALSE SHELVES HISSES OPEN..."

INDEED, MY BROTHER.

YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED OF THE COMING STRUGGLE--

--BETWEEN MY FORCES AND THOSE OF OUR FATHER.

A PITY YOU DID NOT HEED THOSE WARNINGS-- FOR YOUR SPIRIT, WHICH HAS GROWN MUCH SINCE LAST WE MET...

...NOW REACHES THE PREMATURE END OF ITS GROWTH, AND MUST DIE.

"THE DAGGERS--MADE OF GOLD--AND WIELDED BY ASSASSINS WHO ARE EXPERTS IN THEIR DEADLY CRAFT..."

"THE COLOR OF GOLD, IN MY MIND, IS SWEEPED AWAY BY A TIDE OF CRIMSON."

NEXT: THE BEGINNING OF THE GREATEST MAGNUM OPUS EVER PORTRAYED IN COMICS!! THE INITIAL EPISODE IN THE SIX-PART ULTIMATE CONFRONTATION WITH FU MANCHU-- PART I (SHANG-CHI): SEED OF DEATH! (AND A MARTIAL ARTS DAGGER-DUEL THAT'LL BLOW THE TOP OF YOUR HEAD OFF!!)

MISSIVES TO THE MASTER!

56 MARVEL COMICS GROUP, 575 MADISON AVE. N.Y.C. 10022

To Doug & Paul:

After reading comics for 15 years and never writing a single letter to any of the Marvel "mini-novels" I absorb monthly, I find it unusual that I should now respond to a title which I formerly (and I emphasize "formerly") considered to be a lesser Marvel effort. Nevertheless, here I am writing a letter to what is, at present, one of my five favorite Marvel books.

A self-styled critic like myself could not and would not contemplate MASTER OF KUNG FU #39 without also considering #38. And to say that I am overwhelmed by these two issues is an absurd understatement. Everything hit me at once: The incredible script, amazing art, and the excellent inking, coloring, and lettering. I don't know whose idea it was to use the Siamese cat, but congratulations—it was an excellent technique.

And now, I guess, comes that section of my letter where I should *really* start overflowing with praise. The only problem is...the words which would do this story justice simply don't exist. So let it simply be said that the nicest thing about MASTER OF KUNG FU #38 & 39 is that the whole was considerably greater than the sum of its two parts.

John Williams
1204 NE 5th Street
Gainesville, FL 32601

Glad you liked the synergism, John—but to answer your question...

Both Doug and Paul are confirmed cat freaks. Doug has two mixed-breed, near-twin longhair cats (Punk and Booger; Boogie's got a dark spot by her nose), and Paul has a Siamese with no name. (But then, Paul digs Clint Eastwood, too...)

Now: If we remember correctly, the idea to employ the Siamese cat as a running motif throughout "Cat" and "Fight Without Pity" was originally Doug's—but sparked by Paul (now *there's* collaboration for ya!). Y'see, Paul and Doug were in a Manhattan book store a while back when Doug looked up from the "cinema" section to spy Paul leafing through a gigantic pictorial coffee table tome on cats. Something immediately clicked in Doug's head—a moody, poignantly evocative scene of this sleekly beautiful Siamese cat silently following Shang-Chi down shadowy alleyways. So Doug described the image to Paul, who instantly elaborated on it, and before the two of them were thrown out of the book store for yakking instead of buying...well, you *know* the rest.

Dear Doug, Paul, and Petra,

At long last the full power and beauty of Paul Gulacy's masterful art has manifested itself. I speak, of course, of the all-Gulacy artwork in MOKF #40. The subtleties of Paul's inks in this issue made obvious something I've long suspected and there is no denying it; the best inker for Gulacy is Gulacy. Also, the deft Petra Goldberg contributed immensely to the art with her subtle and evocative coloring. She and Paul turn out some of the best-looking stuff I've ever seen. By all means, keep Petra around.

And Doug Moench, you're nothing less than excellent!

Ed O'Reilly
215 E. Lehr
Ada, OH 45810

Dear Doug and Paul,

Following on the heels of two classic multi-parters (Velcro and Mordillo), the conclusion of "Cat" in MOKF #39 ("Fight Without Pity") is utterly beyond my poor capacity to describe

in words. Doug is manipulating his characters into all sorts of unexpected directions, with a possible rekindling of the Leiko/Reston relationship as well as the imminent confrontation between Shang-Chi and Nayland Smith. Speaking of Leiko, even though she's been a relatively minor character thus far, I've a hunch she will soon play a major role in Shang-Chi's life. I've also a hunch Doug plans to probe her background to an extent which should make the future of this mag very interesting, to say the least.

And Doug, that was an extremely beautiful love story so neatly disguised between the violent parameters of a martial arts extravaganza, for both Shen Kuei and Juliette were personalities of great depth and fortitude, each clinging to the fabric of a different illusion. I was immensely pleased that the Cat/Shang-Chi battle did not occupy the entire issue, something which would have severely lessened the story's impact. Shang-Chi's adherence to principle was also nice to note, for it reveals that you have hardly abandoned the "rising and advancing" aspect of the series. Overall, this was a superb piece of work, yielding upon subsequent readings much which lay hidden the first time around. At present, I wouldn't make even the slightest suggestion for this book's future; I'm enjoying things too much as they are.

Paul Gulacy, you absolutely blow my mind to pieces. You pencil the most awesome fight scenes imaginable; your storytelling is first-rate; and the facial structures of all the characters tell stories in themselves. The more physical appearances of both Juliette and Shen Kuei conveyed exceptional insights into their respective personalities. I'm also awed by your ability to compress multiple events into minimum space. For instance, on page seven, panel one, you've portrayed Reston driving up to Leiko's house, leaving his car to enter the house, and Leiko practicing tai chi—all in one beautiful panel. With such economy, your ability to grasp the reader and move the story along increases a thousandfold. And you're already aware of my appreciation for your martial arts scenes; page seventeen's display of Shang-Chi's virtuosity with nunchaku sticks was a classic of timing and movement. A masterpiece of blinding speed occurring between panels; I can think of no finer way to graphically depict Shang-Chi's incredible skill. Doug, let's see more weapons-battles in the future—so Paul can be given his artistic head and choreograph us all into Nirvana with his genius.

More Leiko, more weapons fights, more Moench, and more Gulacy. What more could one ask for—?

Ralph Macchio
188 Wilson Drive
Cresskill, NJ 07626

How about paid vacations, Ralph?

But seriously, about that "pictorial compression," Paul says: "The *real* reason I put so many elements into a single panel is because that Moench character insists on jamming too much stuff into his plots!"

And, in turn, Doug offers the following explanation: "The reason this issue's story is titled (in part) 'Golden Daggers'—when the daggers actually appear in only one scene—is because that Gulacy character insists on omitting a lot of stuff from my plots! So the belated (but even more exciting by virtue of expanded space) Golden Dagger duel which was intended for this issue will appear *next* issue—and believe us, Ralph, it'll amply appease your appetite for weaponry action! And on top of that, you'll see Fu Manchu on a sea hunt for the most colossal oyster in the world—and no, we ain't gonna tell you what's embedded at the center of the pearl!"

And, in closing, both Paul and Doug say, in unison: "Be good."